

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8014

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION BERLIN

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 14845

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: GW UR PGOV PFOR

SUBJECT: SOVIET DIPLOMAT'S COMMENTS ON FRG/USSR DIFFICULTIES OVER
BERLIN.

REF: BONN 14624

1. SUMMARY: SOVIET EMBASSY COUNSELOR TOLD EMBOFF OCTOBER 12 THAT HE WAS FAIRLY OPTIMISTIC THAT THE RECENT FRG-SOVIET PROBLEMS OVER BERLIN WOULD BE SOLVED DURING FONMIN SCHEEL'S VISIT TO MOSCOW IN EARLY NOVEMBER. HE SAID THAT PROGRESS WOULD DEPEND ON GERMAN WILLINGNESS TO MAKE SOME COMPROMISE AND ALSO ON IMPROVEMENT IN THE OVER-ALL BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. (HE CONCEDED HE MEANT SOME GERMAN MOVEMENT ON LONG-TERM, LOW INTEREST CREDITS). MEANWHILE, FRG FONOFF REPS ARE ACTIVE IN PRAGUE AND WARSAW, TRYING TO PAVE THE WAY FOR SOLUTION OF GERMAN PROBLEMS OVER BERLIN WITH THESE TWO COUNTRIES BUT DO NOT EXPECT ANY DECISIVE MOVEMENT UNTIL AFTER SCHEEL'S MOSCOW VISIT. END SUMMAR6.

2. SOVIET EMBASSY COUNSELOR TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE DETECTED A CERTAIN
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READINESS FOR COMPROMISE ON THE ISSUE OF LEGAL ASSISTANCE IN THE

BERLIN CONTEXT ON THE PART OF THE FRG. HE ALSO THOUGHT THAT WEHNER'S RECENT COMMENTS IN MOSCOW AND BONN (BONN 14122) HAS IMPROVED THE ATMOSPHERE IN MOSCOW SO THAT THE SOVIET SIDE TOO WAS PREPARED TO BE RESONABLE.

3. THE SOVIET REP WARNED THAT THE FRG SHOULD NOT EXPECT TO GET ALL ITS OWN WAY, HOWEVER: HE THOUGHT GROMYKO WOULD BE FAIRLY THOUGH WITH SCHEEL WHEN THE LATTER IS IN MOSCOW IN EARLY NOVEMBER. THE GERMANS HAD TRIED TO OVERPLAY THEIR HAND ON BERLIN MATTERS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE EES. HE NOTED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE FRG HAD INSISTED THAT BULGARIA AGREE TO A WEST BERLIN RESIDENT'S TRAVELING IN BULGARIA WITH AN FRG PASSPORT ON A WEST BERLIN IDENTITY CARD, WHEREAS THE BERLIN AGREEMENT SAID THE RESIDENT COULD TRAVEL WITH THE PASSPORT AND IDENTITY CARD. SUCH GERMAN TACTICS, THE SOVIET COMMENTED, ONLY AROUSED SUSPICIONS ON THE SOVIET SIDE AS TO THE GERMAN INTENTIONS.

4. THE SOVIET REP SAID THAT IF THE BERLIN PROBLEMS WERE TO BE SOLVED THIS WOULD ONLY COME IN THE CONTEXT OF A FURTHER IMPROVEMENT IN THE OVER-ALL BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. PRESSED TO EXPLAIN, HE SAID THIS COULD INVOLVE AMONG OTHER THINGS IMPROVEMENTS IN THE ECONOMIC -
COMMERCIAL FIELD, INCLUDING FIELD, INCLUDING LONG-TERM, LOW-INTEREST CREDITS.

5. SOVIET REP SAID THAT HE KNEW GROMYKO WELL FROM HAVING WORKED IN HIS OFFICE FOR SOME YEARS. GROMYKO DID NOT KNOW ALL THE DETAILS OF THE BERLIN AGREEMENT BUT WOULD PROBABLY TAKE A POSITION WITH SCHEEL SOMETHING ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES: BERLIN PROBLEMS WERE SETTLED IN THE QUADRIPARTITE AGREEMENT, IN WHICH THE SOVIET SIDE MADE SEVERAL MAJOR CONCESSIONS; NOW THE FRG WANTS YET ANOTHER CONCESSIONS; THE SOVIET UNION WILL MAKE IT, IF IT IS NOT TOO LARGE, BUT ONLY IT GETS SOMETHING IN RETURN. IN THIS CASE THE SOVIET COUNSELOR THOUGHT THE SOVIET COUNTERDEMEAN WOULD BE IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD. HE SAID HE DID NOT WANT TO MAKE THE MATTER TOO SIMPLE, BUT HE THOUGHT THIS WAS HOW GROMYKO WOULD APPROACH IT.

6. SOVIET COUNSELOR PROBED TO SEE HOW THE WHOLE ISSUE OF LEGAL ASSISTANCE AROSE IN THE BERLIN CONTEXT. HE SAID THERE SOME ON THE SOVIET SIDE WHO SAW THE HAND OF THE THREE ALLIES IN THE AFFAIR;
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THESE SOVIETS INTERPRETEED THE PROBLEM AS HAVING BEEN CREATED BY THE THREE POWERS, OUT OF CONCERN FOR THE IMPROVING FRG-USSR RELATIONSHIP, IN ORDER TO FORCE THE FRG INTO A CONFRONTATION WITH THE SOVIETS AND HENCE SLOWDOWN IN IMPROVEMENT IN BILATERAL RELATIONS. EMBOFF SAID CONSPIRACY THEORY OF POLITICS MIGHT BE FUN INTELLECTUALLY BUT USUALLY BORE NO RELATIONSHIP TO THE FACTS. THIS WAS A CASE TO PROVE THE RULE.

7. EMBOFF DESCRIBED BRIEFLY FRG FEELING THAT SOVIETS WERE PICKING AWAY AT SMALL PARTS OF THE FOREIGN REPRESENTATION AND TIES ASPECTS OF THE FRG-EST BERLIN RELATIONSHIP AND HAS USED THE LEGAL ASSISTANCE ISSUE TO MAKE ITS POINT ABOUT THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE MATTER TO THE USSR. SOVIET COUNSELOR CONCEDED RUEFULLY THAT THE PUBLICIZING OF THE ISSUE AND ESPECIALLY THE CANCELLATION OF BRANDT'S TRIP TO PRAGUE IN SEPTEMBER HAD BROUGHT THE MATTER TO THE ATTENTION OF TOP SOVIET OFFICIALDOM. THIS HAD BROUGHT PRESSURE FROM THE TOP TO SETTLE THE PROBLEM IN A REASONABLE MANNER.

8. TO SOVIET COUNSELOR'S QUESTIONS AS TO WHAT FORM A REASONABLE SOLUTION TO THE LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROBLEM MIGHT TAKE, EMBOFF EXPRESSED IGNORANCE. HE SAID THIS WOULD HAVE TO BE RAISED WITH FRG FONOFF REPS WHO, HE UNDERSTOOD, WOULD BE VISITING MOSCOW NEXT WEEK TO WORK OUT BERLIN PROBLEMS PREPARATORY TO SCHEELS'S VISIT.

9. FYI: FRG FONOFF REPS WERE IN PRAGUE IN PAST TWO DAYS TO SEE ABOUT PREPARING THE GROUND FOR FURTHER FRG-CZECH TALKS, PERHAPS IN NOVEMBER. CZECHS WERE REPORTEDLY HAPPY THAT THE BERLIN PROBLEMS NOW LIE IN FRG-SOVIET HANDS. WE ASSUME THE POLES WILL ADOPT A SIMILAR ATTITUDE WHEN SCHEEL VISITS WARSAW NEXT WEEK.
END FYI.

10. COMMENT: OUR GENERAL IMPRESSION FROM THE SOVIET REP'S REMARKS IS THAT THE SOVIETS ARE PREPARED FOR SOME FACE-SAVING DEVICE TO RESOLVE THE LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND PERHAPS OTHER PROBLEMS INVOLVING BERLIN IF THE FRG COMES THROUGH ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE. THE FRG, FOR ITS PART, ALSO SEEMS TO BE LOOKING FOR A PRACTICAL WAY OUT OF THE IMPASSE THAT HAS BEEN REACHED. IF THE PRESENT ATMOSPHERE CONTINUES, WE ARE INCLINED TO SEE THE DIFFICULTIES REMOVED BY MID-NOVEMBER AND THE FRG THUS ABLE TO NORMALIZE ITS RELATIONS WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA, HUNGARY AND BULGARIA, PERHAPS BY THE END OF THE YEAR.
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